

In the passage, Norman Mailer describes a championship boxing match. He uses a journalistic style with a novelist's skill to re-create the action that is associated with the event.

Note the patterns of sentences in the passage. In the first paragraph, the first three sentences are informative statements with the subject at or near the beginning. The fourth sentence, however, begins with the conjunction "But," and the subject appears 11 words into the sentence. The effect of this structure is to call our attention to a change in the implications of the information, to the length of his decline, and to the length of his fights. Both the sentence and the paragraph end with the word "maulings."

In the second paragraph, the action suddenly accelerates. Sentences become shorter, and most of the words are monosyllabic. In line 25, the focus shifts from the fighters to the observers at ringside. Then, when the narrator's hypnotized reaction has been mentioned, the reader's attention is redirected to the ring, but this time to an involved observer, the referee.